

# Groepsteams in de residentiële jeugdhulpverlening : een onderzoek naar de verbetering van het teamfunctioneren na een integratieve teamtraining

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## SUMMARY

Young people who, as a result of either behavioural or family problems, temporarily cannot live at home any longer, are admitted into the field of residential youth care. During the time of admittance the primary responsibility in residential youth care is to take care of the education and treatment of the young; these tasks are carried out in cooperation with the parents as much as possible; this is called the primary process. Education and treatment in the units are realised by group staff workers. Residential youth care, being a twenty four-hour service, is the most intensive form of youth care. To ensure the continuity and workload division it is inevitable that education and treatment are carried out by a team. Besides workload division the main advantage of working in a team is that the availability of both expertise and experience can be increased. Cooperation processes in the group team differentiate from the primary process and are termed: team process.

In The Netherlands systematic research of the team process has not yet been carried out. Team process was the main focus of this study, in which was examined whether team process can be improved through a training developed especially for this purpose.

In **Chapter one** it is stated that team process is often problematical. Formation of a group team in itself is not a guarantee for good team performance. A group team is composed of staff workers who all differ in background, values, ideas on education and phase of development. To bring about a positive use of the variety of these group staff workers it is imperative to explicitly invest in team process. As an appropriate means for the improvement of team process a training model for group teams is introduced: integrated team training. To evaluate integrated team training as a means to improve team performance a research question is formulated

'Have team aspects that determine team process improved after integrated team training?'

**Chapter two** explores the performance of group teams in actual practice. First, criticism on the efficiency of residential youth care is studied. This criticism is translated into the need to invest in quality improvement of residential youth care. The group teams fulfil a key role in realising the main goal of residential youth care, i.e. education and treatment of young people. Because of this, group teams are an important starting point in improving the quality of residential youth care. In practice, however, there are factors which complicate their performance.

1. In the formation of a group team coincidence plays a major role. The diversity of personalities is an important factor that creates problems in the group team's performance.
2. The concentration of a wide range of severe behavioural problems in a heterogeneous unit complicates both the education and treatment of young people as well as team performance.
3. Residential youth care lacks adequate diagnostic instruments which is reflected in generally and abstractly formulated treatment plans. This flaw increases the demand on problem solving capability of the group team.
4. Residential youth care has been integrated into society during the last decades resulting in decentralised housing. The theory to realise living conditions as 'normal' as possible is at odds with its practical execution.
5. Because of decentralisation group teams have to be more self-reliant than before. Support and feedback from institutions have grown to be a problem and one-person shifts are no exception.

To delineate team performance a distinction is made between the primary process and the team process. The primary process comprises education and treatment of young people; the team process refers to communication and interaction between group staff workers as well as planning and execution of education and treatment. The primary process and team process are inextricably bound up with each other and improvement of both is imperative for the group team to reach its set goals. This study focuses on the team process.

Five team aspects are discussed: problem solving capability, decision-making, goal orientation, client orientation and development orientation. These selected team aspects are postulated as defining factors in team performance. The research question is now formulated as follows

'Have problem solving capability, decision-making, goal orientation, client orientation and development orientation improved after integrated team training?'

**Chapter three** focuses on strategy; intervention by means of integrated team training and its evaluation. Integrated team training focuses on those aspects which influence team process. The group team is interpreted as a system. The notion of a system refers to a unit, composed of parts and its relations. It focuses on the relations between all of these aspects. Then the design of the evaluation is briefly discussed.

**Chapter four** is devoted to the theoretical foundation of team aspects: problem solving capability, decision-making, goal orientation, client orientation and development orientation as well as the theoretical definition of these aspects.

In a group team a number of problems occur which interfere with team performance. Based on the principles of the socio technical approach, problem solving capability is defined as the degree to which group staff workers in a group team can solve regulatory problems. This can be accomplished on an autonomous level, through discussion with colleagues or through team discussion. To improve team performance it is essential that the group team is capable of solving occurring regulatory problems.

Decision-making refers to a phased process aimed at defining a problem, developing alternatives and choosing between these alternatives. In accordance with a theoretical decision analysis it is explained that both the object of decision-making and the formation of the decision-making process are ambiguous and complicating. Possibilities for conflicting decision processes are numerous and it is imperative to pay much attention to decision-making and its justification. 'The efficiency model in decision-making' by Janssen, Veenstra and Van de Vliert (1996) is followed. In this model a logical relationship is worked out between the conflict situations, the behaviour demonstrated by the team members in discussion and the outcome of decision-making.

Goal orientation points to the manner in which form and content are given to the process resulting logically from the choice for a particular action alternative. This team aspect is defined in a motivational theoretical way by pointing out that in the concrete planning of goal orientation the principles of 'high performance cycle' must be met.

Client orientation is inextricably linked with goal orientation: two sides of the same coin. In the choice of goals, clients have an active input and their cooperation is essential. Although this basic assumption seems obvious, in practice realisation is not that simple. To accomplish educational and treatment goals it is necessary to motivate the client to actively take part in the care process. In residential youth care the group team is able to play an important role in all of this. Client orientation is defined as the orientation of the group team to ensure that agreements on the goals to be realised and the manner of realisation are made with the client system concerned.

Development orientation refers to systematic improvement of those team aspects which determine team performance. In itself this orientation of the group team is an aspect that can be improved. Following present-day quality thinking the group team is hereby assigned its own responsibility. In addition to the effects of this training there may be possible side-effects. Firstly attention is paid to a possible relation between problem solving capability and other job characteristics. Secondly, attention is paid to a possible relation between team aspects on the one hand and individual features of the group staff worker on the other hand.

**Chapter five** describes the integrated team training. The training is made up of five training days and three evaluation sessions. During the evaluation sessions the experiences with the implementation of the training model are discussed. The integrated nature of the team training is emphasised by clarifying in each part of the training which team aspects are influenced directly and which ones indirectly.

**Chapter six** is reserved for the explanation of the study's purpose. The methodological aspects are examined in consecutive order.

A comparison with national data has been made through the use of a sample survey. The experimental group and the control group compare favourably with the national data. The method of research used in this study to examine 'improvement' in team aspects, individual features and other job characteristics is the comparison model for independent groups: test results before and after the integrated training are compared. The effects on team aspects which occur after intervention are systematically researched, based on a research model.

Existing and for this study especially modified and developed questionnaires are used to measure the team aspects, the individual features and other job characteristics. Six institutions for residential youth care in the province of Limburg have participated in the research: two equal group teams of each institution. At random one group team is placed in the experimental and the other team is placed in the control mode. In order to process and analyse the results after the field research, the data of the six experimental and the six control teams have been combined into one experimental and one control group.

**Chapter seven** is used to analyse the research results. Firstly attention is paid to the results of the first measurements. The starting positions of the experimental and the control group are described and compared to each other. In the analysis of the research results of the second measurement the comparison of the experimental group's development with the control group's development takes a central place. On the basis of the results of the comparison of research variables the research questions are answered. Finally the other findings of the job analysis are further examined.

The research findings of the first measurement indicate that the differences in results between the groups - for the most part concerning team aspects- are mostly significant. Taking the research findings from the first measurement into account the analysis of the second measurement is based on a gainscore analysis. Analysis of covariance is applied as well. The research results after intervention show that team aspects have improved after integrated team training. The supposed correlation between team aspects is also confirmed by research findings. This study's choice to start with an integrated approach to improve team aspects is also supported by these findings. The supposition that

improvement of problem solving capability leads to improvement of other job characteristics is confirmed for only two job characteristics, namely degree of complexity and data supply.

Improvement of team aspects does not result in improvement of job motivation, job satisfaction or a reduction in health complaints. However, research findings do point out that after improving problem solving capability job satisfaction improves.

In addition to the analysis and evaluation of job characteristics, the job analysis has produced the following findings. Group staff workers are confronted with a number of unsolved regulatory problems. A noticeable regulatory problem is the deficiency in adequate knowledge and skills. A clearly indicated hindrance is that group staff workers experience one-person shifts to be a burden in the execution of their tasks.

**Chapter eight** discusses the research findings, phrases the final conclusions as well as the recommendations. In the discussion sub questions are handled. Other findings of the job analysis are commented upon with particular attention to the most frequently occurring regulatory problems and hindrances in the job of a group staff worker. With the methodological considerations it is noted that staff changes have taken place within seven group teams. On the whole, however, the study has seen a fairly stable research phase. These staff changes indicate a short stability factor of residential group teams within residential youth care. The participating institutions have gone through organisational changes due to policy developments during the course of this study. The foregoing should be taken into consideration in evaluating the research conclusions.

The measuring instruments are discussed while recommendations for modification are made. To further improve knowledge on ways to enhance team performance larger-scale research is necessary. Integrated training has been researched for the first time during this study. Further research is necessary to generalise the findings. Suggestions are made for an adapted practical completion of the training. It is recorded that the instruments used after adjustment are appropriate for measuring team performance.

The conceptual model, being the foundation for the research design, was modified based on the research findings. Taking these results into consideration, in the final conclusions the research questions receive their definitive answers. On account of the positive results it is recommended that both the implementation of integrative team training as well as the research on this subject are continued on a larger-scale basis.